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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ATHENS 000205

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [NATO](#) [MK](#) [GR](#)
SUBJECT: GREECE/MACEDONIA -- CONTINUED INSISTENCE ON
"UNIVERSAL SOLUTION"

REF: ATHENS 154 (NOTAL)

Classified By: Ambassador Daniel V. Speckhard for 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) In our ongoing conversations on the Macedonia name issue, we have been highlighting the importance of the Interim Agreement, emphasizing the need to respond seriously and positively to Nimetz' framework and proposals, and pointing out the gaps we see in Greece's current approach. Uniformly our Greek interlocutors, including PM Karamanlis' senior diplomatic advisors and FM Bakoyannis' Chef de Cabinet, have ruled out any solution other than a "universal solution" requiring a change in Macedonia's name for all uses. End Summary.

The U.S. Line - Be Reasonable and Thoughtful

¶2. (C) Following Ambassador Speckhard's conversation with FM Bakoyannis (reftel), we have continued to press Greek officials at all levels on the Macedonia name issue, including a 2/13 meeting of Ambassador Speckhard, DCM, and A/Pol Counselor with PM Karamanlis' diplomatic advisors Alexandros Sandis, Constandinos Bitsios, and Marina Skordeli; a 2/7 conversation between DCM and FM Bakoyannis' Chef de Cabinet Amb. Kostas Chalastanis; and a 2/12 DCM conversation with Bitsios. We have made the following points:

-- We continue to believe the Interim Accord offers the best solution for the immediate issue of a NATO invitation for Macedonia. Although the Greek position has been communicated clearly to us (and to the press), walking away from the Interim Accord will have wide ramifications.

-- The U.S. has made clear to Skopje it must engage actively and positively within the Nimetz process and address Greece's concerns.

-- We expect Greece to engage positively and seriously on whatever Nimetz puts on the table, including if he chooses to flesh out with specifics his proposed framework to negotiate a name to be used in international organizations/treaties, to leave bilateral recognitions to be worked out on a bilateral basis, and not to require a change in Macedonia's constitutional name.

-- If Skopje signals that it could accept a solution along these lines, the U.S. and Europe will expect Greece not/not to block a NATO invitation to Skopje and accept this reasonable compromise. The U.S. and Europe will not understand if Macedonia moves and Greece doesn't.

-- Greece's assumption that this is Washington's problem, rather than Greece's problem, is fundamentally flawed. The U.S. has a major stake in NATO's success and Balkan stability, but not greater than Greece's own. Greece and Macedonia stand to lose the most.

-- We do not have the ability to force Macedonia, a sovereign government, to change its constitutional name, as Athens believes, nor to impel the PM of either country to commit political suicide.

-- We do not see indications that Greece has done an analysis of the costs and benefits to Greece of fulfilling its veto threat, nor is it evident Greece has thought through the "day after" scenario. We would anticipate an significant upswing in rhetoric and actions that Greece would perceive to be irredentist and provocative. Furthermore, the two sides would be farther from, and not closer to, a solution.

The Greek Response -- Nope

13. (C) Our efforts and arguments have made absolutely no headway. Chalastanis provided no substantive reply other than to reiterate the Greek view that the U.S. could simply solve this problem by creatively putting the "right mixture of pressure and incentives" to Skopje.

14. (C) PM Karamanlis' diplomatic advisors were more loquacious in reply, but the end result was the same. Sandis argued that Greece could only accept a "universal solution" and that anything short of this would "bring down" the

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government and be "political suicide" for PM Karamanlis. Sandis, Bitsios, and Skordeli all ruled out any proposal that would not require a change in Macedonia's constitutional name, noting that PM Karamanlis had "gone half way" in agreeing to accept a compound name with the term "Macedonia" included. They were blunt -- Karamanlis has gone as far as he can politically go, and there would be "no Greek government to work with" if Greece were compelled to accept more than this. They recognized that it would be "bad for Greece" should Skopje's Euro-Atlantic aspirations be frustrated, but they asserted that there are "no other options." Despite our repeated efforts to have them think through with us what the "Day after the Veto" would look like, they did not do more than re-assert that a post-veto environment would not be worse than today's situation.

15. (C) Sandis and Bitsios also claimed that "Ambassadors in Skopje" assessed that Skopje could be persuaded to change its position on amending its constitutional name "with the right pressure from the United States and others." However, they said such a move was likely no longer possible prior to the April NATO Summit, but could be done "6 to 8 months" later. They reiterated that Greece would refuse to join Alliance consensus on an invitation for Macedonia absent an agreed solution, and did not elaborate (although given the opportunity to do so) how any Alliance decision on an invitation to Macedonia might be revisited within/postponed for 6 to 8 months. Ambassador Speckhard emphasized that our Ambassador in Skopje and experts in Washington had a fundamentally different view and did not believe that the U.S. could convince Skopje to change its constitutional name.

Comment: Flexibility Lacking

16. (C) Although we will continue to press our interlocutors at all levels, we see little indication that the Greeks will show greater flexibility in responding to Nimetz next week. In the short-term, the best we can hope for is that Greece

will not make public its opposition to whatever Nimetz
tables, which would box the Government in even further. End
Comment.
SPECKHARD